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**FILM CLUB**



Chinese Series  
Spring 2019

Wu Tianming  
1939-2014

The King of Masks  
1996

# A Century of Chinese Cinema: an introduction

Noah Cowan • 3 June 2014

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From the 1930s golden age via kung-fu and swordplay epics to new waves and the modern era, we introduce the five sections that make up our huge, four-month celebration of 100 years of filmmaking in China.

**A Century of Chinese Cinema.** It's a daunting title for a cultural project, and one appropriately subject to skepticism. The doubts begin with the first 'C', for 'Century'. Not only are there several possible dates to use as a starting point for any centenary (especially a milestone like this), but much of the early history of Chinese cinema is utterly lost to us, even more so than that of other cinemas. Yet even though hundreds of the earliest Chinese films were swallowed up in the social and political chaos that engulfed China in the first decades of the 20th century, those invaluable films that remain give evidence that Chinese cinema could provide not only a much-needed escape for the country's beleaguered citizenry, but a tentative vision of a new society freed of both stultifying tradition and anarchic terror.

Now to the second questionable 'C': 'Chinese'. Due to conflicts of various kinds, filmmaking in east Asia has been multipolar in the extreme, producing numerous significant production centres that defy the film-historical myth of a unified 'national cinema' focused on a single location. For this reason, critics and scholars have tended to isolate major centres of Chinese filmmaking – namely the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan – and champion these as distinct national cinemas.

While there is a great degree of logic to this approach, it is difficult to deny that the films made in these different places share much common ground, culturally, aesthetically, and philosophically. Furthermore, recent scholarship has done much to reveal the remarkably fluid movement of Chinese filmmakers between these three regions, from cinema's very beginnings to the present day. It is this rich, complex and continuing inter-/intra-cinematic dialogue between these three regions – changing, evolving, rupturing and reforming over the course of a century – that this four-month programme explores.

And now for that final "C": "Cinema" itself. As the ways in which films are created, distributed and viewed continue to change with astonishing speed, the very definition of 'cinema' itself has been called into question, with visual arts, gaming, and multiple other forms stretching the boundaries of moving-image culture.

We are keenly aware that, no matter its scope, this series could have taken several alternate and equally valid forms. Chinese cinema is rich beyond belief, and at least twice this many films could have been included in such a survey. We have aimed to achieve a balance between the canonical and the unjustly neglected, the historically vital and the thematically intriguing, and we have tried to cover as wide a spectrum of the key genres as possible.

Just as we seek to trace a dialogue between cinema traditions, our series is designed to encourage discussion, not close it down. And even though the very notion of positing films from these three regions as a unitary cultural enterprise is an inherently controversial one, we regard this programme as an opportunity to both discover those elements they share and explore potential new pathways of scholarship and cinematic discovery.

## The golden age

The 1930s in Shanghai were a golden age in many spheres of Chinese culture, cinema chief among them. Widely considered by the rest of the country as a den of iniquity, catering to foreign invaders walled off in concessions throughout the city, Shanghai presented an ‘anything goes’ attitude that proved enormously fruitful for the upstart new medium.

Despite heavy censorship by the Guomindang (Nationalist) government, Shanghai filmmaking during this period – aided considerably by the Chinese Communist Party cadres who infiltrated the growing studio system – was able to shatter age-old taboos and champion utopian ideals. Early masterpieces such as *The Highway* (1934) and *Street Angel* (1937) not only look towards a more just and equal society, but question how the art of cinema itself might be reconceived along progressive lines by experimenting with innovative visual techniques and unusual narrative structures.

The unquestioned symbol of 30s Shanghai filmmaking was Ruan Lingyu, the Garbo of Chinese cinema, who became the industry’s biggest star with her performances in such classics as *The Goddess* (1934) and *New Women* (1935) before tragically taking her own life at the age of 24.

Not only did Ruan’s outsized screen presence pave the way for a Chinese cinema that would largely be dominated by major female stars, but she helped make women in cinema emblematic of the larger progressive struggles then taking place. Both Nationalists and Communists viewed the liberation of women from the barbaric practices of the imperial era as a necessary component of a modern, 20th-century China. Furthermore, female characters are prominent presences in the literature of the progressive, western-oriented May 4th Movement, whose works and authors figured largely in golden age Shanghai cinema and well into the post-1949 era.

The other major influence on the cinema of the golden age was another, considerably more dire struggle. Following numerous incursions into China by Japanese armies from the start of the 1930s, the Sino-Japanese War broke out in earnest in 1937 and led straight into the carnage of the Second World War – over a decade of traumatic conflict that cut China in half, filled its cities with starving refugees, and resulted in the deaths of as many as 20 million Chinese. Several of the key films of this period naturally take the war and its aftermath as its subject, from the 1947 two-part epic *The Spring River Flows East* (regarded as China’s *Gone with the Wind*) to the crowning achievement of the golden age: Fei Mu’s 1948 masterpiece *Spring in a Small Town*, considered by many critics as the finest Chinese film ever and one of the greatest films of all time.

## **A new China**

The victory of the Chinese Communist Party over the Nationalist forces in 1949 marked the end of the long Chinese civil war and the birth of a radically different nation. Yet despite the vast and far-reaching changes effected throughout all spheres of Chinese society by the ideological imperatives of the new regime, it is intriguing to trace the continuities between the cinemas of the pre- and post-Revolution periods. Despite the state-sanctioned dictates of socialist realism, many of the most critically and commercially successful Mainland films up to the Cultural Revolution continued to derive from the acknowledged classics of Chinese progressive culture associated with the prewar May 4th Movement.

Meanwhile, brief periods of cultural experimentation such as the Hundred Flowers Campaign emboldened filmmakers to once again engage in social commentary and take both political and aesthetic risks,

leading to such recently rediscovered masterworks as Lu Ban's extraordinary *An Unfinished Comedy* (1957). This intriguing period would come to an end with the onset of the Cultural Revolution, the last and most brutal crackdown on intellectuals, which halted narrative film production for more than a decade.

The 1949 Revolution would have an enormous impact on the cinemas of the other territories as well. In Hong Kong, where the British officials who ruled the colony were wary of films that might stir up social conflict, the commercial cinema of Hong Kong kept the progressive spirit of the golden age alive by using the frameworks of popular entertainment to address social issues in such powerful melodramas as *Parents' Hearts* (1955) and *In the Face of Demolition* (1953). In Taiwan, meanwhile, where the defeated Nationalist forces had taken refuge and instituted a form of martial law – which included cinematic censorship under the banner of 'healthy realism', the Guomindang correlative to the Mainland's socialist realism – political commentary nevertheless found its way back into cinema, under the guise of historical drama or as subplots in romantic melodramas. And as before, progressive sentiments in Chinese cinema went hand in hand with the presence of strong female characters, in such gentle realist dramas as Li Hanxiang's wonderful *The Winter* (1969).

### **Genre cinema**

First emerging near the end of the 1920s, the wildly popular martial-arts films (known as *wuxia pian*, literally 'chivalrous combat films') quickly became a target of official sanction. The Guomindang (Nationalist) government, taking umbrage at the films' outré special effects and bevy of louche women, banned them for promoting "superstition and moral decadence". After 1949, the Communists would continue this policy for much the reason, claiming that the films promoted the worst aspects of feudal China.

In the late 1940s, with anti-*wuxia* policies in place both on the Communist Mainland and Guomindang-controlled Taiwan, talent from both the world of filmmaking and that of the martial-arts schools began a migration to Hong Kong, where the genre revived in the late 1940s with the fantastically popular series of films based on the life of the real-life martial-arts guru Wong Fei-hung. While the swordplay-focused *wuxia* film reached its peak in the mid-60s to the mid-70s with the luxurious productions of Chang Cheh and King Hu, it would be an offshoot of *wuxia* that would bring the martial-arts film to the world: the unarmed combat-based kung-fu genre, which found its global figurehead in the one and only Bruce Lee.

The 80s and 90s saw several major evolutions in the genre as the craze for the 'classic' martial-arts film began to wane. Jackie Chan found global superstardom as the clown prince of kung fu, blending the often solemn martial-arts template with slapstick and sensational stunts; prolific Hong Kong New Wave leader Tsui Hark would take the *wuxia* film into a lavish new era with a series of ambitious epics; while the enormously influential, Hark-produced *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987) brought fantasy and the supernatural into the martial-arts mix. Finally, at the turn of the century, martial-arts cinema returned to the Mainland that once spurned it: following Ang Lee's global success with *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), a series of baroque, Mainland-produced *wuxia* epics such as Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002) and Feng Xiaogang's *The Banquet* (2006) garnered significant domestic and international success.

Concurrent with and intrinsically related to the rise of the *wuxia* and kung-fu genres were the Hong Kong gangster and crime thrillers, which refracted the martial-arts films' themes of loyalty, brotherhood and patriotism through a dark, distorting lens. Originating in Hong Kong's socially progressive cinema in the mid- to

late-1960s, the genre began to evolve in a considerably more nihilistic and hyperbolic direction in the 1980s. Johnny Mak's startlingly bleak *Long Arm of the Law* (1984) laid the groundwork for the gangster-film renaissance that blossomed with John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), which made 'heroic bloodshed' the new byword of Hong Kong action cinema with its outrageously stylised, over-the-top gun battles. Subsequently, several other innovative directors would take the genre to exciting new places: Andrew Lau and Alan Mak reinvigorated Hong Kong cinema as a whole with their 2002 hit *Infernal Affairs*, while the great Johnnie To took a considerably more cynical and sardonic look at Woo-style blood-brothering in a series of hard-edged crime films that culminated in his 2005 diptych *Election* and *Election 2*.

## **New waves**

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution looms as large in Chinese memory as the traumatic experience of the war years. Launched in 1966, the Cultural Revolution paralysed cultural and intellectual life and violently uprooted society in both the cities and the countryside: swarms of militant young Red Guards attacked or publicly humiliated their 'backwards' elders and destroyed artefacts of China's historical and religious heritage, while the military, the factories, and even the Communist Party itself were subjected to systematic purges. As with all the other arts, cinema was profoundly affected by the ravages of the Cultural Revolution: film production was stopped altogether for a time, and only gradually restarted with an exclusive output of ideologically orthodox model operas.

As the Mainland finally emerged from the shadow of this cataclysmic event a decade later, the filmmakers who became known as the Fourth Generation – a pre-Cultural Revolution cohort, many of whom had themselves been denounced, 're-educated' and forced to endure the ridicule of young militants for their commitment to culture life – sought for ways to express the ordeal that had been visited upon the country. The result was the so-called 'scar films', simple, affecting dramas that employ intimate and small-scale narratives focusing on individual tragedies as microcosmic representations of massive societal trauma – a style of storytelling that would prove remarkably influential even beyond the context of the Cultural Revolution.

Some of the Fourth Generation's most notable figures, such as Xie Fei and Wu Tianming, also served as mentors to the leading lights of the Fifth Generation, who had been the first students admitted to the Beijing Film Academy following the end of the Cultural Revolution. Marked by radical aesthetic experimentation, boldly emotive performances, and complex and critical thinking about the events leading up to and following the 1949 Revolution, such celebrated films as Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (1984), Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* (1987), and Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Horse Thief* (1986) came to represent a definitive break with preceding Mainland cinema, while their dazzling play with colour and striking, often symbolic use of landscape endowed them with an epic dimension that brought Chinese cinema to the forefront of the international art-house circuit.

As these radical changes in cinematic culture took place on the Mainland, much was changing in the other regions as well. The Hong Kong New Wave – characterised by the tough-minded social realism of Ann Hui and the wildly inventive genre revisionism/extremism of Tsui Hark – challenged the predictable, studio-bound commercial Hong Kong film industry with a combination of boundary-pushing content, local specificity and outré stylisation that both alienated and galvanised local audiences.

In Taiwan, where the strict Guomintang censorship that had existed for decades gradually eased as the regime's strength waned, the emergence of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang marked the arrival of a new generation of art-house masters.

Though markedly different in many ways, the roughly simultaneous cinematic renaissances that occurred in Hong Kong and Taiwan share some powerful links with the emergence of the Fourth and Fifth Generation filmmakers on the Mainland. Whether through intimate character study (*The Women from the Lake of Scented Souls*, 1993), flamboyant spectacle (*Farewell My Concubine*, 1993), art-house rigour (*A City of Sadness*, 1989) or displaced allegory (*Boat People*, 1982), the weight of history is keenly felt in the films that emerged from all these assorted New Waves.

Furthermore, continuing a pattern that can be seen throughout the history of Chinese cinema in all three regions, it is notable how these new cinematic movements have foregrounded female characters, as well as the actresses who play them. Most notably, Gong Li (from the Mainland), Brigitte Lin (a native of Taiwan) and the Hong Kong-born Maggie Cheung (soon to be a fixture of the Hong Kong Second Wave) would capture the imagination of audiences much as the great Ruan Lingyu did in her day, and would help bring Chinese cinema to both new heights of achievement and new levels of international recognition and success.

### **New directions**

After the terror and violence that had dominated the Chinese experience of the 20th century, that century's end – marked by the Mainland's rise to global economic pre-eminence, the surprisingly smooth return of Hong Kong to the Mainland as a Special Administrative Region, and the reinstatement of democratic debate in Taiwan following decades of authoritarian Guomintang rule – felt comparatively optimistic.

Yet this serenity also carried a strange, indefinable uncertainty about it, creating a kind of apprehensive malaise that would be both reflected in and expressed by an increasingly more diffuse Chinese cinema. As overt political, cultural and generational conflict appeared to recede, the collective consciousness that had bound the previous Generations and New Waves together began to disperse, allowing for more distinctly individualistic, stylistically eclectic and globally-oriented filmmakers to come to the fore.

Nevertheless, even as those Mainland filmmakers who comprised the so-called Sixth Generation – Wang Xiaoshuai and Jia Zhangke chief among them – rejected that label and went to great lengths to deny any shared approach to cinema, their films still display some marked group characteristics: an increased cosmopolitanism, a preoccupation with urban life that has much in common with the Hong Kong New Wave, a predilection for exquisite compositions and gentle pacing that owes much to Taiwan's Hou Hsiao-hsien, and a taste for small-scale, delicately wrought narratives of ordinary people buffeted by vast social change that rhymes with the Fourth Generation 'scar' films and rejects the largesse (some would say excess) of the flamboyant Fifth Generation epics.

In Hong Kong, the Second Wave that appeared at the end of the 1980s took the opposite approach to the Sixth Generation's carefully studied minimalism. Led by Wong Kar-wai and Stanley Kwan, the Second Wave created impossibly lush, superbly stylised films that introduced a powerful new art-film aesthetic to international cinema, one that seemed to speak to the anxiety, velocity and instability of contemporary urban existence. Wong's *Chungking Express* (1994) in particular – in its bold experimentation with editing and framing,

fragmentary narrative construction, and woozily beautiful camerawork by Christopher Doyle – has been singled out by critics and academics as an encapsulation of the ‘postmodern’ in both its style and subject.

Wong’s supercharged *fânerie* evident assumes a more slothful, deadpan comic aspect in the work of Tsai Ming-liang, the most important and exciting new filmmaker to emerge from Taiwan at the turn of the century. Both strangely otherworldly and remarkably insightful in their oblique social criticism, Tsai’s absurdist reveries transpose the breathless speed of Wong’s money-fuelled Hong Kong to Taipei and slows it down to a mesmerising crawl.

The rootlessness evinced by Wong’s lovelorn romantics and Tsai’s opaquely yearning drifters is also mirrored in the wandering protagonists of the films of many Mainland directors: the bohemian artists of Wang Xiaoshuai’s *The Days* (1993), the travelling players of Jia Zhangke’s *Platform* (2000), and even the bumbling rural cop of Lu Chuan’s debut feature *The Missing Gun* (2002).

Yet even as the latter film marked the emergence of an edgy new style in Mainland cinema that emulated the technical flash and dazzle of Hollywood, its director brilliantly demonstrated with his second film *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol* (2004) – a gritty survival epic that questions and repositions the Fifth Generation’s veneration of landscape – that complex dialogue with the past, combined with an ambitious attempt to remake cinematic language, that has been the hallmark of this extraordinary century of Chinese cinema.

## Wu Tianming

Bérénice Reynaud • May 2015

Article sourced from Senses of Cinema: <http://sensesofcinema.com/2015/cteq/stirring-the-ripples-wu-tianmings-the-old-well-lao-jing/>

**Wu Tianming**, Chinese film director and producer (born Oct. 19, 1939, Sanyuan county, Shaanxi province, China—died March 4, 2014, Beijing, China), served (1983–90) as the daring head of the state-run Xi’an Film Studio and provided encouragement for the pathbreaking antiestablishment movies made in the 1980s by such “Fifth Generation” filmmakers as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige; he also directed several films that gave an unflinching view of events in China, notably *Meiyou hangbiao de beliu* (1983; *River Without Buoys*), an account of the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Wu launched his career as an actor with the Xi’an Film Studio and was poised to enter (1966) the Beijing Film Academy, but when his father, a government official, was purged that year, Wu’s acceptance was rescinded. During the 1970s he finally gained admittance to the academy, where he studied directing. Following his graduation, he returned to Xi’an as an assistant to influential director Cui Wei. Wu’s other directorial credits include *Rensheng* (1984; *Life*), about a schoolteacher who leaves his peasant sweetheart to live in the city, and *Laojing* (1986; *The Old Well*), the Tokyo International Film Festival top-prize winner about a village with an unreliable water supply. Many of Wu’s and the Fifth Generation directors’ works were censored and failed to gain wide distribution in China. During the 1989 government crackdown on protesters in Tiananmen Square, Wu was a visiting scholar in the U.S. and decided to stay, but he became restless as a video-store proprietor and returned to China. He went on to direct *Bianlian* (1996; *The King of Masks*), *Shouxizhixingguan* (2002; *CEO*), and *Bainiao chaofeng* (2013; *Song of the Phoenix*), which told of a traditional musician’s inability to find an audience for his artistry in modern urban China.

# Wu Tianming

Karen Sparks • March 27 2014

Article sourced from Encyclopædia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Wu-Tianming>

When Wu Tianming died in March 2014, commentators around the world were aware that a page of Chinese film history had definitely been turned. Born in 1939, Wu had to wait, like many people of his generation, for the end of the Cultural Revolution to be able to start making films. After co-directing a first feature, *Reverberations of Life* (*Shenghuo de chanyin*, 1979) with Teng Wenji, he was appointed deputy director of the Xi'an Film Studio, then promoted to head. At 45, he was the youngest man to occupy such a position in China at the time.

The studio was where he left his biggest mark, continuing to direct as he produced the work of young directors who became famous as “The Fifth Generation”: *The Black Cannon Incident* (*Hei pao shijian*, 1985) by Huang Jianxin, *The Horse Thief* (*Dao ma zai* 1986) by Tian Zhuangzhuang, *King of the Children* (*Haiji wang*, 1987) by Chen Kaige, and *Desperation* (*Zhuibou de fengkuang*, 1987) by Zhou Xiaowen.

Wu's feature *River Without Buoys* (*Meiyou hangbiao de beliu*, 1982), following the lives of three men working as rafters on the Xiao River, is credited as the cinematic harbinger of the post-Cultural Revolution “thaw,” and was followed by *Life* (*Rensheng*, 1984), about the travails of a young rural schoolteacher facing an environment of corruption.

For his next project, Wu cunningly and elegantly combined his two vocations. A graduate from the Beijing Film Academy's Cinematography Department wanted to become a director. He had already left his mark as the cinematographer for major Fifth Generation films produced through the Guangxi Film Studio – Zhang Junzhao's *One and Eight* (*Yi ge he ba ge*, 1984), Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (*Huang Tudi*, 1984) and *The Big Parade* (*Da yue bing*, 1986). His name was Zhang Yimou, and not only was he skilled with the camera, but Wu sensed that the camera loved him: he was both good-looking and charismatic. Interviewed in 1990<sup>1</sup>, Zhang recounted that Wu presented him with an offer he couldn't resist: he would shoot *The Old Well* (in collaboration with Chen Wangcai) and star in the film, and in exchange Wu would produce Zhang's debut feature, *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gaoliang*, 1987).

*The Old Well* turned out to be Wu's most successful film, winning the Grand Prize at the Tokyo International Film Festival and paving what could have been a road to international success. Instead – and accurate historical facts may take a while to emerge – as Wu was traveling through North America the crackdown of June 4, 1989 took place, and either something he said, or a fallacious report, made his return to China impossible.

He stayed in the Los Angeles Chinese suburb of Monterey Park, opening a modest video store with his nephew. The place was a treasure trove of impossible-to-find VHS tapes, and, as I was writing a book on Chinese cinema at the time, I would visit him often. “This is the continuation of my work to promote new Chinese cinema,” he would say smilingly, always the modest, compassionate and gracious gentleman.

A few years later, Wu was finally able to go home and direct a few more movies, but he was not reinstated at the Xi'an Film Studio, which cut short the ground-breaking role he had played in the history of Chinese cinema.

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<sup>1</sup> 1. Bérénice Reynaud, unpublished interview with Zhang Yimou, Taiyuan, December 1990, translated by Shan Dongbing.



Meanwhile, *The Old Well* has masterfully resisted the passing of time and its influence keeps growing. Its minutely observed, yet humorous and non-ideological depiction of the lives of ordinary people, and its generous rendering of the bawdy folk culture existing in rural areas, have been a source of inspiration for cutting-edge filmmakers such as Jia Zhangke or the younger Hao Jie, who so lovingly described the sexual obsessions of peasants in *Single Man* (*Guanggun'er*, 2010) and *The Love Songs of Tiedan* (*Mei Jie*, 2012).

*The Old Well* does not pit a hero figure or a victimised protagonist against a bad system. It's a multi-polar film, in which nature, common greed, lust, passivity, gossip, bureaucratic pettiness and each character's personal agenda play a part, like many instruments in an orchestra, allowing for strident or comical dissonances, or "values clashing with each other."<sup>2</sup>

Old Well, a Taihang Mountains village in the arid northeastern Loess Plateau, has been without water for generations. Hundreds of wells have been dug, but they all ended up dry. Returning home after studying engineering, Sun Wangquan (Zhang Yimou), represents hope for the villagers. He is sweet on another educated youth, Zhao Qiaoying (Liang Yujin), but his domineering father has arranged for his wedding with a beautiful widow, Duan Xifeng (Lv Liping)<sup>3</sup>.

In spite of the difficulties of the rugged terrain, Wangquan accepts the task of digging yet another well, with the help of his younger brother, Wangcai, a sexually-obsessed slacker, and a reluctant Qiaoying. The well collapses, killing Wangcai and trapping the other two. In an echo of a similar scene in Emile Zola's coal-mining novel *Germinal*, Wangquan and Qiaoying, believing they are going to die, make love.

Aboveground, the villagers have teamed up and manage to rescue them. Things return to normal: Wangquan goes back to his now-pregnant wife and Qiaoying leaves Old Well forever.

Later, at Wangcai's funeral, an official comes to investigate, having heard that one of the villagers commissioned "bawdy performances" from a troupe of itinerant singers. Usually considered a marginal character in the film, Wangcai, the "bad" little brother who steals women's underwear and who had, indeed, brought the troupe of singers to the village, may be its most modern – a link to Hao Jie's horny peasant bachelors. The title of the film is, ultimately, a double entendre, as the phrases "stirring of ripples in an old well" (*Gujing qingbo*) and "dredging an old well" (*taogujing*) mean re-awakening a woman's sexuality.<sup>4</sup>

Wangquan, the well digger, fulfils this function for both Xifeng and Qiaoying, turning Zhang Yimou into a universal object of desire for the spectator. A fine critic of Chinese mores and psychology, Wu Tianming also had a keen sense of humour.

**Prod Co:** Xi'an Film Studio **Prod:** **Dir:** Wu Tianming **Scr:** Zheng Yi **Phot:** Zhang Yimou, Chen Wangcai **Ed:** Chen Dali **Art Dir:** Yang Gang **Mus:** Xu Youfu  
**Cast:** Zhang Yimou, Liang Yujin, Niu Xingli, Lv Liping

NB: Names in this article follow the Chinese order, with family names first.

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<sup>2</sup> 2. Wu Tianming quoted in Harry H. Kuoshu, *Celluloid China: Cinematic Encounters with Culture and Society* (Carbondale: SIU Press, 2002), p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> 3. This was Lv Liping's third film role, triggering a brilliant career in which she graced the films of Tian Zhuangzhuang (*The Blue Kite/Lan fengzheng*, 1993), Zhang Yang, Yu Lik-wai, Peng Xiaolian, Jia Zhangke (*24 City/Ershisi cheng ji*, 2008), Zhang Yimou and others.

<sup>4</sup> 4. See Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 69.

## Filmography as director

- **Song of the Phoenix** (2013)
- **C.E.O.** (2002)
- **An Unusual Love** (1998)
- **The King of Masks** (1996)
- **The Old Well** (1987)
- **Life** (1984)
- **River Without Buoys** (1983)
- **Qin yuan (Kith and Kin)** (1980)
- **Reverberations of Life** (1979)